

## THE ELEMENTS OF POETRY

Element	Definition	Characteristics
Figurative Language	The comparison of two objects or ideas either directly (metaphor) or using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> (simile); the connotation of one word changes or elaborates the meaning of the other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be only a word or two, or be sustained throughout the poem</li> <li>• Compares two things that we might not think are like each other at first</li> <li>• Makes us see things in new ways</li> </ul>
Imagery	The use of language to create sensory impressions (mental images).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evokes a sense of sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, or movement</li> </ul>
Personification	A way of speaking about animals as if they were people or inanimate objects as if they were living.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a kind of metaphor</li> <li>• Uses contrast to evoke images</li> </ul>
Rhythm	A pattern of recurring strong and weak syllabic stress in the flow of poetry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the beat or cadence of the poem</li> <li>• Related to the structure or metrical form</li> </ul>
Rhyme and Sound	Either identical or very similar recurring final sounds in the words at the ends of lines of verse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized in different ways to form the structure or patterns of the poem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Couplet</i>: two rhyming lines (usually of the same length or number of syllables) in succession</li> <li>• <i>Triplet</i>: three rhyming lines in sequence</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Repetition	Repeated words or phrases that help to create the rhythm and momentum of a poem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can repeat any word in any place in the poem</li> <li>• Can repeat a word every line or the same word within a line</li> </ul>
Alliteration	The repetition of an initial sound in neighboring words or in stressed syllables.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds to the sound quality of a poem</li> <li>• Works with rhythm to create tonal quality</li> </ul>
Assonance	The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeated vowel sounds followed by different consonant sounds</li> <li>• Creates a partial rhyme</li> </ul>
Consonance	The repetition of the final consonant sound in words with difference vowels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not rhyme.</li> <li>• Creates tonal harmony within a poem.</li> </ul>

Figure 13.1 The elements of poetry

continues

THE ELEMENTS OF POETRY		
Element	Definition	Characteristics
Onomatopoeia	The use of words to suggest an actual sound.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses many words that exist in language (buzz, pop, moan)</li> <li>• Sometimes changes the spelling of words to emphasize sound (zoookooooom)</li> <li>• Sometimes includes made-up words to represent sounds</li> </ul>
Layout/ Line Breaks (Shape)	The way a poet lays out the lines of a poem to support the central meaning or add meaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups words/ideas together to convey meaning</li> <li>• Reveals the form or structure</li> <li>• Supports rhyme and rhythm</li> <li>• May take a shape that creates imagery, movement, or suspense</li> <li>• May take concrete shape that adds to the meaning</li> </ul>

**Figure 13.1** The elements of poetry (cont.)

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY FOR CHILDREN		
Definition	Characteristics	
A form of writing that uses compact language, pattern (verse), and rhythm to express feelings and ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be fiction or nonfiction</li> <li>• Uses fewer words to convey meaning</li> <li>• Appeals to the thoughts and feelings of the reader</li> <li>• Uses rhythm</li> <li>• Placement of words helps you know how to read</li> <li>• Looks different from prose</li> </ul>	<p>Often:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes you see, smell, hear, and feel things</li> <li>• Uses rhyme</li> <li>• Uses repetition</li> <li>• Uses figurative language</li> <li>• Uses patterns (verse)</li> <li>• Has a shape that can tell you about the meaning</li> <li>• Offers a new way of seeing things</li> <li>• Tells about nature</li> </ul>

**Figure 13.2** The characteristics of poetry for children

## Personification

Poets often use personification, which attributes human characteristics to nonliving things, to help you see or feel things in new ways. The poem “Undecided” (Fletcher 1997) is full of personified images. When the poet tells you that “the wind speaks with winter’s tongue,” you feel the cold. When he describes the “sky using the pond as a mirror” or the “pond wearing bracelets of sky,” you see the images of matching blue.

## Rhythm

Meter is the rhythmical pattern in verse. Rhythm is measured in small groups of syllables, called *feet*. In English, a foot is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Therefore, meter, or rhythm, is made up of stressed and unstressed syllables. Most poetry has rhythm; the origins of poetry are rooted in chants and songs. Rhythm helped people memorize songs. Sometimes poets create their own rhythm,